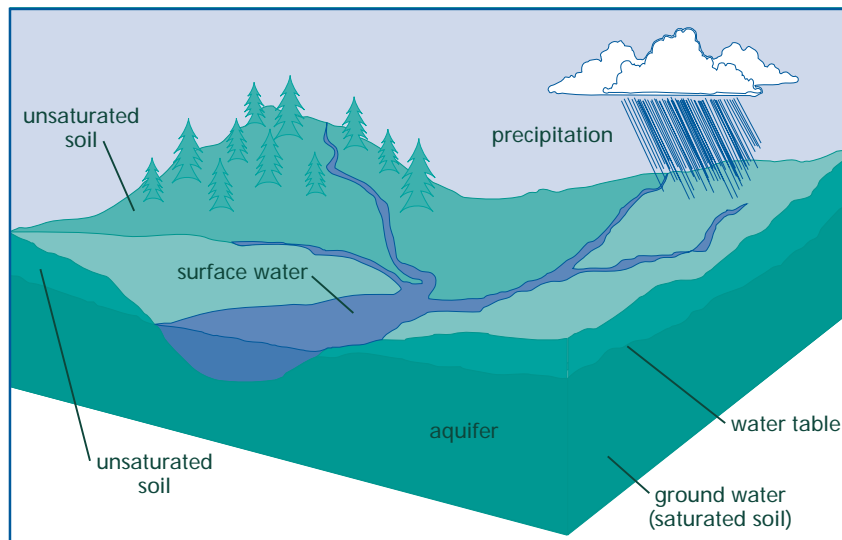




## *Where Does Our Drinking Water Come From?*

Our drinking water comes from two major sources– surface water and groundwater. Surface water includes rivers, lakes, streams, and reservoirs. Groundwater includes underground aquifers. One of our most valuable resources, aquifers are things you can't see and may not even know are there! Aquifers are formed when air spaces in rocks below the ground become filled with water. Aquifers readily transmit water to wells and springs. Wells can be drilled into the aquifers, and water can be pumped out to provide our drinking water.

### Drinking Water Sources



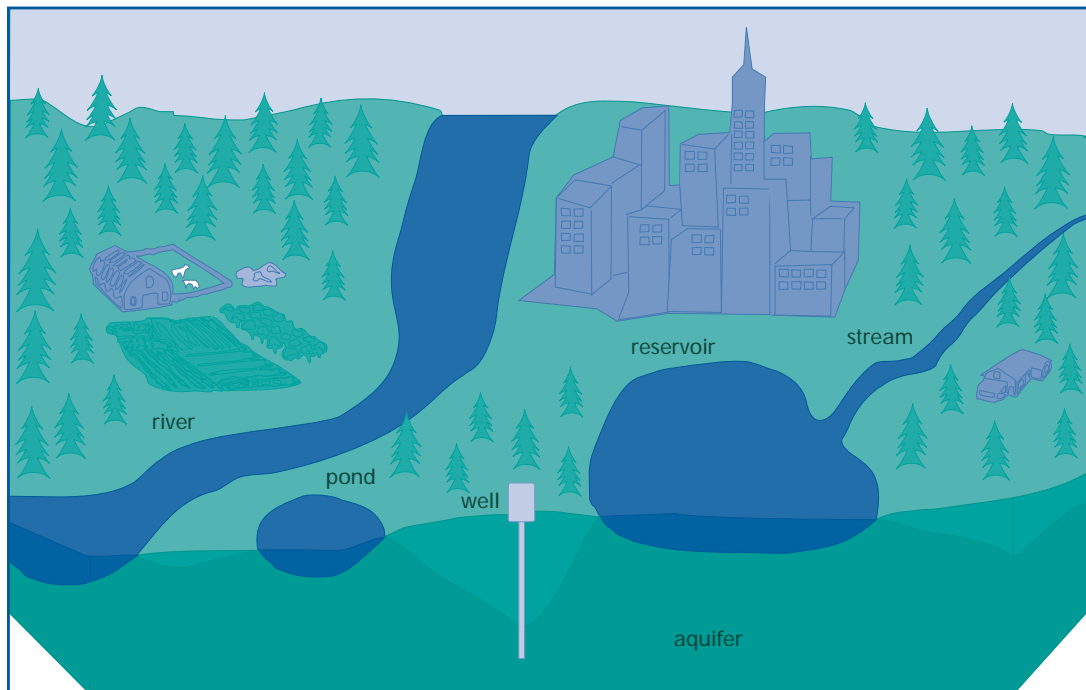
Rain and melted snow eventually add water (recharge) into the porous rock of the aquifer. The rate of recharge is not the same for all aquifers though, and that must be considered when pumping water from a well. Pumping too much water too fast draws down the water in the aquifer and eventually causes a well to yield less and less water and eventually to run dry. In fact, pumping your well too fast can even cause your neighbor's well to run dry if you are both pumping from the same aquifer.

## *Importance of Safe Drinking Water*

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Protecting our sources of drinking water helps provide safe drinking water which is essential to a community's health and economic viability. Unsafe drinking water can lead to long term health effects like cancer or immediate health threats that can sicken a whole community. Without a safe and adequate water supply, businesses will not remain in or relocate to a community.

### Communities are Built Around Water Supply Sources



Surface water supplies 10,760 community water systems that serve more than 160 million people. For those parts of the country that don't have ample surface water sources, such as the arid West, groundwater is an important natural resource. Groundwater provides drinking water for 43,607 community systems serving almost 84 million people. It also provides drinking water for about 20 million people who use private wells.

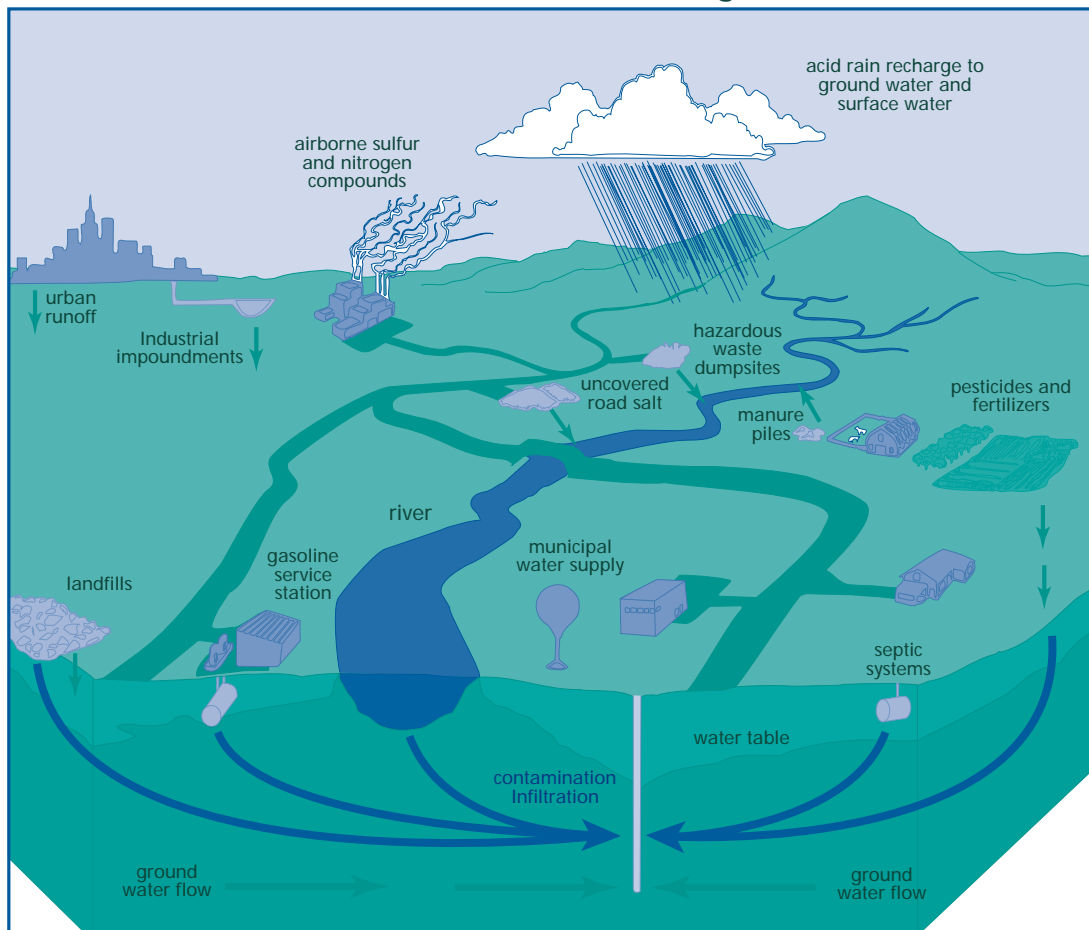
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## *Threats to Our Drinking Water*

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Contaminants introduced at the land surface may infiltrate to the water table and flow toward points of discharge, such as drinking water wells and streams. The most common threats to drinking water sources are pollutants transported by runoff (overland flow of water from rain and melted snow), insanitary landfills, leaking underground storage tanks, septic systems, animal feeding operations, and overuse of fertilizers and pesticides.

Potential Threats to Drinking Water

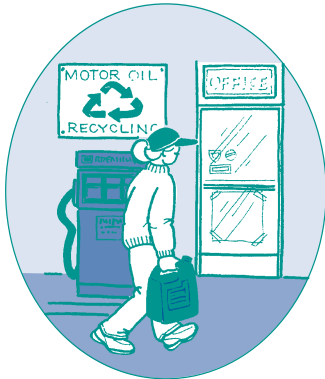


## Ways to Protect Our Drinking Water

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By taking some simple steps in your home or community, you can play a part in protecting our drinking water sources. Make it a point of duty to:

- Dispose of household and other chemicals properly. That is, don't pour chemicals on the ground or down the sink drain, toilet, or storm drain.
- Take used motor oil to the recycling center.



- Use only recommended amounts of fertilizers and pesticides.
- Have your unused wells properly closed.
- Pump and inspect your septic tank regularly.
- Plant vegetation on bare spots of the soil, particularly on slopes, to prevent erosion and excessive runoff of sediments into nearby water bodies.
- Become involved in drinking water protection activities in your community.



Art on this page by Lynne Bergschultz